



A Whole Body Tragedy

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A Whole Body Tragedy by obsessive_c

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Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Pennywise (IT), Richie Tozier, Sonya Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris

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Summary:

The Losers Club is now a mix between 15 and 16. Most of them have moved on from the summer of 1989, at least enough to go on about their daily lives without fear. Well, all but one, 6 of 7. Eddie is the one numeral that hasn't.

A fic where Eddie has severe PTSD after the events of 1989, the events from Pennywise. This is his journey through his emotions, his coping, and him getting treatment, or lack thereof. His friends don't know how to help, will he be able to help himself?

Ahh I'm so excited about writing this fic! Keep in mind I've only seen the MOVIE, I loved it so much! I'm going to see it again later this week and I am also purchasing the book, for the joy of it but also to hopefully gain more insight on character interaction! I have PTSD,

and I always wondered what it would be like to write a character with it, it turns out I relate with Eddie, and I could see him having the biggest emotional aftermath after it. This may be ooc, and I don't have an editor so I apologize for mistakes on either aspects. Constructive criticism, comments and kudos are greatly appreciated! :)

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

First chapter! I've been working hard on making my writing more descriptive, and I'm hoping it shows! Enjoy :)

"It's so nice." Richie said, for once being completely genuine, looking at all the carved pumpkins and kids trotting to each door to scoop handfuls of candy from the smiling parents. Eddie couldn't help but nod, all of his friends also humming with agreement. Despite the group now being a mature mix between 15 and 16, they had all been dead set on trick or treating until they, as Richie quoted, had more wrinkles on their faces than streets in Derry.

Bill and Bev were dressed as Danny and Sandy, their arms swinging together cheerily. Ben was dressed as a mummy, telling them all how he proudly made the bandages look aged with Tea earlier that day. Mike was dressed as a scarecrow, mostly because almost all the things that costume required was easily in access at his farm. Stan was dressed as Brian Johnson, strutting confidently with black sunglasses despite the late hour. Richie was dressed as the Monster of the Black Lagoon, but his "costume" was only face paint and green shorts and a shirt, he always forgot about making a costume until the night of. Eddie, much to Richie's distaste, was dressed as a werewolf, the tip of his nose colored charcoal black, along with whisker dots on his lower cheeks. The flannel he found was a bit oversized, and he wouldn't tell his friends, but he scrounged the stores of Derry to find the wispy fur glued to the outskirts of his jaw, cheap latex ears tucked neatly behind it. They all were at a leisurely slow pace, kids running past them on both sides every few moments.

"Y-y-yeah," Bill mused, "Up there is a b-big crowd." Eddie tensed at that, anxiety making his stomach tighten, Richie knocked shoulders with him,

"Relax hotshot, all those little squirts will scatter once us mature adults pass by with our superior costumes."

“Superior? You're wearing face paint and green clothes, trashmouth!” He scoffed, earning laughs from everyone in the group but the one under fire, distracted. Little did Eddie know that was exactly Richie's intention.

“Wow Eds. A truly low blow.” Richie said dramatically, clutching his chest as if he'd been shot. Eddie rolled his eyes, and they walked up to a door, Mike giving a polite knock. An older woman, a clerk at the grocers down the road answered the door, smiling and holding out a bowl for the teenagers to take candy from. All did eagerly, well, all but Eddie, who's nose scrunched in distaste at all the germs from other kids hands in the bowl, it's Flu season, and he doubted children were as good with hygiene as he was, it was a cocktail of germs and sickness waiting to happen. He turned around, waiting for them as they traded their favorite treats amongst each other. He almost fainted from what he saw.

It was Pennywise, as real and terrifying as when he saw the it fall down the sewer years ago. His throat was tight with terror, and Eddie dropped his bag. Pennywise gave him a disgusting smile, walking to him from amongst the crowd. Eddie's heart was pounding in his ears, and then, Pennywise stopped, looking down at the children, Eddie wanted to pull all of them away from the creature. It's clawed hand lowered, snatching a kid up with a clean snap of her neck, she was held limp in its grasp, Pennywise's smile widened with sharp rows of teeth, and he ripped open the poor toddler, letting out a delighted, rumbling laugh. That's when Eddie screamed, running forward and tripping, his nose making a sickening crunch on the sidewalk. When he looked up, the clown was gone, but he still sat up and scrambled back from the crowd, wailing in terror. Bill and Mike caught him in their arms, shocked, making sure he wouldn't hit his head on the doorstep behind him, but he still thrashed violently, seeing it's glowing eyes when he shut his. Richie held his face still as he could,

“Its okay Eds, it's okay. Breathe, you're safe.” He said, pulling one of Eddie's spare inhalers from his pocket and placing it in Eddie's mouth, pressing the plunger as Eddie took in a gulping breath. Blood was running heavily down his face, from his nose and a large scrape on his forehead. His cries slowly quieted, his friends surrounding him and whispering reassuring words. Beverly rubbed his back

comfortingly. When his breathing finally steadied he slumped back into his friends arms, looking up at fluorescent lights strung in the nice old lade's trees exhaustedly, dread sinking into his bones.

"Okay Eddie, what happened?" Stan asked gently once he seemed fairly settled down. Eddie slowly sat back up from his friends comforting grasps, not meeting anyone's eyes.

"I saw Pennywise. It was," Eddie paused, letting in a shuddering breath, "staring at me from across the crowd. It walked towards me and then-" A just as shuddering exhale, "it grabbed a girl, a toddler, from the crowd and snapped her neck, ripping her open and laughing at me." All of his friends eyes were on him, concerned. Ben was about to speak when Bill shook his head. Now, when their friend was terrified and bleeding wasn't the time to ask if Pennywise truly could return. "I'm sorry for ruining the fun, I should bike home." Eddie whispered, his shoulders slumped weakly and shaking.

Beverly shook that sad thought away, "It was getting to be late anyway, plus that lady let us have the rest of her bowl, we have enough to make plenty of cavities til next year." All of them but Eddie nodded eagerly, slowly helping him to his feet.

"Plus we're all sleeping at Bills, you know half of the night is gonna be us trading candy, its so entertaining you can't miss it!" Mike said overenthusiastically, earning a weak laugh from Eddie.

"Better than getting an earful about this all night and then getting locked in my room." He responded, which made all of them feel sad for a moment. Richie was the first one to shake that mood off.

"Well, let's get goin Eds. All that blood and the kids are gonna think you're an actual werewolf." They all laughed, walking towards Bills house with arms wrapped around Eddie.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

The Losers enjoy the rest of their Halloween night, for the most part.

The rest of that Halloween night was relatively fun for Eddie. Or, at the least, distracting enough for him to stop thinking about what happened earlier. The candy tradeoff had soon turned into a candy throwing fight. Bills room was quickly a minefield of gummy bears and candy corn, and each of them yowled in pain when they stepped on any hard piece of candy with surprise, which only made the rest of them laugh more.

They ended the night with personal scary stories, but they all adamantly dodged the scariest one for all of them, instead Beverly telling them about the ghost in her old house, Mike telling them about a ghost in his farm as well, and how one time Stan and Bill saw what could only be a flying saucer. Ben didn't have one to give, other than walking in on his mom naked when he was 7, which permanently scarred him. Richie told everyone he ran into Bigfoot when he was camping, and it actually seemed pretty realistic and credible til Richie said it macked on him, earning a slap upside the head from Eddie.

Eddie honestly didn't have a scary story to share so he just passed. Sitting in your sterile room til you're 8 and taking placebic pills til you're 13 doesn't make a fun childhood with interesting stories, he learned that when he was 9, telling a story at school about how his doctor mixed up his medicines and lost his mind laughing, the names were so clearly different! While he certainly enjoyed his story, the rest of the class while looked at him like a fish out of water.

After being fairly unsettled by each others stores they all set to go to bed, making a giant pallet of soft blankets and throws on the floor. Even Bill slept in it instead of his bed. Bill and Stan fell asleep almost immediately, haphazardly and unintentionally cuddling in their sleep. Bev was curled to her side next to Mike, who was lying face down and snoring contentedly. Richie was lying side up in between

Mike and Ben, shifting every few seconds to find a comfortable position. Eddie was lying at the edge of the soft blanket pile, eyes wide open, unable to sleep. Bills newly installed Fire Detector had a bright red little light in contrast to the dark room, and it made Eddie's stomach roll in discomfort, feeling as if it was staring at him. He eventually, when he was sure everyone was asleep, rolled softly off of the makeshift bed, sneaking out of the room and to the bathroom.

He shut the door slowly, making sure he heard no-one rustle awake. He beelined to the sink, washing his hands thoroughly, looking at his injured face in disdain. The scrape looked pretty bad, but well enough to just clean and not bandage. His nose, however, was quite probably broken, Richie joking earlier that it sounded like the crack of opening up a medicine bottle. It was crooked, despite him cracking it back into alignment when he first got to Bills house.

He knew about broken noses, and he knew it wasn't serious enough to go to the emergency room for. The clinic was closed til Monday, so him and his broken nose would have to wait two days until treatment. He was seriously considering staying at his friends houses for the next two days, knowing if his mom saw his face she'd ground him for at least a month, crying about how the world being too dangerous for poor poor Eddie. He looked at himself, his eyebrows furrowed, if only she knew what he's faced, then she would know how strong he was.

He turned to leave the bathroom and attempt to sleep again when a probing thought invaded his mind, was he actually even strong? Sure, he helped his friends defeat the horror plaguing Derry, but they all stopped having nightmares about It a few years ago, while he still wakes up screaming often, remembering it grasp his face with it's clawed hand and mockingly cry with him before laughing even more maniacally, about to kill him when Beverly stabbed through it's head, leaving it to laugh and slink away, it's glowing eyes staring at him while it receded. The broken arm was nothing compared to the fear. He was flung back to the present, his heart pounding in his ears loudly just thinking about It. His breathing quickened until he slumped to the floor miserably, his back against the door, hyperventilating and crying like a child. His mother was right, he

wasn't strong.

The memories flooded through his head, It's face growing and morphing grotesquely to show horrifying teeth, ready to eat him. He remembers the moments earlier, running away in terror realizing he was alone, turning back around and falling down to the first floor onto the dirty kitchen table, which snapped underneath him, his head flinging back and his neck on fire. He remembered looking down at his arm, almost throwing up when he saw it fractured in two places, curled against his chest uselessly. All he could do is scramble back before it- He took a lurching breath back into reality, falling forward and catching himself on the tile. He stopped, seeing blood drip from his nose and ruin the white, sterile looking cleanliness. Guilt rumbled with the fear, Richie would hate him if he saw him right now. They-they all would, because Eddie was too weak for them, too fragile.

Eddie shook his head to himself, knowing that they all would never be so cruel. It wasn't them he was afraid of, they all loved him. He was afraid of himself and what was happening. He sat up, wiping the blood off lazily, leaving a smear of red on his cheek. He would usually clean, scrub it off until his face was red and burning, but he was too weak and tired to care, bringing his knees up to his chest, trying to calm the shakes wracking his body. He eventually got tired, he tucked his head between his knees and slept, hoping he would sleep dreamless.

Notes for the Chapter:

I for one LOVE the idea of Bill and Stan unintentionally snuggling when they slept, to clarify they're not together yet either!

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie wakes up to tentative support.

Notes for the Chapter:

Very dialogue heavy chapter!!

He was brought back to consciousness about an hour later from obnoxiously persistent knocks. “What?” He croaked, blinking his tear-stuck eyes a few times before realizing where he was, in Bill's bathroom.

“Open the door asswipe! I have to pee like a bitch.” Eddie rolled his eyes, immediately recognizing Richie's smartass.

“Yeah yeah Trashmouth.” Eddie grumbled, slowly rising, he rubbed his face tiredly and immediately recoiled, the soft touch sending needles of pain through his nose. He opened the door and Richie darted past him, his pants already unzipped “Gross, Tozier!” Eddie yelped, shielding his eyes, “at least let a guy leave the bathroom before you pull your dick out!” Richie didn't respond with anything but a relieved sigh, Eddie's nose wrinkling at the sound of him peeing.

“You can't be too bothered by it Eds, if you were you would've ran out when I popped it out, you're just standing awkwardly in the doorway.” He said, his voice a mix of humor and confidence. Eddie shook his head,

“I'm waiting for your slow ass Trashmouth, we're less likely to wake everyone up if we go in at the same time.” He said, voice still groggy from sleep as he rubbed his neck, which now had a nasty crook in it.

“Yeah yeah, you and your considerate..ness.” Richie grumbled, zipping his shorts back up and flushing, washing his hands. Eddie turned to walk back to the room when Richie grabbed his shoulder, he turned around back to his friend,

“What?”

“I know this is uncomfortable, so I didn't want to bring it up in the group, but have you been.. okay lately? You've always been on edge about Halloween since it happened, but you full on lost it tonight, and it scared me.” He said seriously, his hand still on Eddie's shoulder. “And I wasn't asleep when you left, I heard you leave and I was about to come talk when I heard you cry. A lot. I know I probably should've came and helped, but I thought maybe you needed time alone. Just know I'm here for you, with whatever's going on, okay? I don't want you to feel alone in this.” Richie said, letting out a huge exhale when he was done, he had never talked so sincerely so much, so he was admittedly tired once he was done.

They stood for a few moments, and Eddie had his deep thinking face, probably wondering whether to be comforted or hurt. Richie frowned, just slightly, when Eddie didn't respond, just standing and making eye contact, but his gaze seemed far away. Richie's hand dropped from his friends shoulder and went to leave, he was halfway down the hallway when he heard Eddie mumble. He turned back around, “What?” He asked. Eddie turned to look at him too, slowly and cautiously, and they met at the doorway of the bathroom once again.

“I said I have nightmares about It.” Eddie said, his voice shaking. Richie nodded,

“That's perfectly normal Kaspbrak,” He said lightly, trying to joke. He didn't like seeing Eddie like this, so scared and raw, “I have nightmares about Bens-”

“Almost every night I wake up screaming.” He uttered quickly, vulnerable but almost anxious to tell someone. “It just makes my mom's attitude with me being with you guys worse. But I can't help it. I don't feel safe anywhere anymore. I always feel like it's going to come back, and whatever happened today was the worst it's been.” He was standing straighter now, pouring all of his feelings out onto Richie, who stood silent.

“I couldn't sleep because of the fucking fire detector light, I felt like it was staring at me and I was terrified. I'm always scared now Richie

and I don't know how to fix it. How to move on like the rest of you did, how to not be weak. There's something wrong with me and I don't know how to fix it Richie.” He was crying now, he was so sad and so angry that by the time Richie pulled him into a hug he was sobbing, his entire body shaking with every wail that was muffled by Richies sleep shirt which he held in his fists. Richie held him tight until it was reduced to hiccups, rubbing soft circles into Eddie's back.

“Eds, there's nothing wrong with you. And you're one of the strongest people I know, one of the strongest people in the group I think.” Eddie pulled back from the hug, his puffy red eyes scanning Richie's and only finding truth. “We'll figure out what's happening, I promise. We'll get you help.” Eddie nodded, not having the energy to be angry at himself anymore, his eyes once again drooping from the exhaustion of crying.

Richie held his hand and led him back to Bills room, lying him down and settling down right next to him, facing him. “You're safe, if anything is gonna get you it's gonna have to get through me first.” He whispered. Eddie tiredly rolled to face him, moving closer to Richie, letting out a relieved sigh and grumbling ‘Thanks Trashmouth’. He'd probably wake up in the morning and act like nothing happened, and keep his terror to himself, but for now, he didn't worry, his breath evening to sleep.

Richie took off his glasses with one hand and tossed them behind him to the bed, instead hearing them clatter onto the hardwood floor. He groaned in irritation quietly to himself, slapping his own face. Once he let it go and accepted that he'd have to probably screw one of the sides back on he fell asleep too. Eddie didn't wake up screaming that night.

Notes for the Chapter:

Ahhh Reddie is peeking in! Richie isn't often so sincere so I tried to make that visible in his dialogue:)

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie wakes up to fun, but it quickly turns sour.

Eddie woke up with a gulp of air, jolting up. His friends were also in the process of getting up, Stan and Bill untangling themselves, laughing. Bill padded out of the room to go to the restroom. Mike was poking Beverly, her mumbling about too much candy. Ben was writing in his journal by the window, presumably up the earliest. Eddie sighed, letting his breath steady from the initial startle of waking. Even on his good night's like tonight with no nightmares, waking up has always startled since that summer. He looked to his side, seeing Richie asleep. His cheeks reddened when he remembered their conversation last night. He remembered the hug, and he remembered feeling absolutely safe when he fell asleep. But now his stomach lurched in shame. He had told him too much, it was stupid of him. Richie, no matter how nice, surely must've felt even a little uncomfortable, a little disgusted that Eddie was dealing with this. He was only dealing with him out of politeness. The irrational thoughts raced through his mind, Richie hated him, *he hated hi-*

"H-hey Ed-du-die, you okay? I saw b-blood on the floor in the b-bathroom." Bill said once he returned, leaning on his doorway. All eyes were on him immediately, and his heart rate spiked.

"Yeah I'm okay, I went pee when I was half asleep and rammed my head in the doorway," He lied, and giggled nervously, looking down at his oversized flannel and thumbing with a loose string.

"Yeah," Richie croaked amusedly, sitting up beside Eddie and rubbing his eyes tiredly. "I saw the stupid idiot walk like a dead man into the door, he should've been a zombie for halloween." Eddie smiled, a feeling briefly fluttering in his chest, but as soon as it began it was gone, leaving him feeling deeply appreciative, but also slightly guilty for openly lying to his friends, and the fact that Richie was too, because of him.

"Yeah, and all this dickhead did was laugh, what a helpful friend."

Eddie countered playfully. Richie rolled his eyes while the rest of them laughed. Bill went back to sit on the soft blankets next to Stan, nearly shoulder to shoulder despite the room on the blankets. Eddie squinted, the puzzle pieces finally clicking in his head, they *liked* each other. He looked around the room, Bev and Mike talking happily, did they like each other too? How long had it been like this? He looked over to Ben, and they made eye contact, Ben shaking his head in amusement.

Eddie's amused wonder was interrupted by the dull thud of Richie's head hitting the leg of Bill's bed. "*Fucking shit.*" Richie hissed, his hands searching the floor. Eddie got up swiftly, pushing Richie back onto the blankets gently and grabbing his glasses for him, one of the arms disconnected from it. Eddie grumbled but reached over to Richie's bag and took out his glasses repair kit, dropping to sit next to him.

"You're a pain in the ass, Tozier." Eddie mumbled, focused on getting the tiny screw in its place, fiddling with the arm before screwing it back on. Richie was uncharacteristically quiet, but only Ben noticed the slight look of admiration on his face. Once Eddie was satisfied that it was secure he held it out mockingly, Richie snatching them and putting them on, hoping the pink tint on his cheeks would go unnoticed, and it did.

"Sure Eddie Spaghetti, you know what's more of a pain in the ass? Your mom sticking her fingers up mi-" Eddie punched his arm, earning a laugh.

"Stop making sex jokes about my mom, Trashmouth! You're void of any sort of politeness." Eddie snarled, but that just made Richie laugh even harder.

"Look at your fucking face! You look ridiculous." He wheezed, "Priceless!" Richie said, doubling over with shaking laughter when Eddie's face scrunched even more. Eddie fumed, his face red from embarrassment. He gulped self consciously, feeling eyes on him. His mood dropped.

"Whatever Richie," He spat, getting up and going to the restroom. He knew it was a joke, and he knew Richie wasn't really laughing *at him*

, but that didn't stop the tears from pricking at his the corners of his eyes. There he was again, being a baby, not taking a simple joke from one of his best friends. Stupid stupid stupid, now they're all upset because of him.

He went to the bathroom and slammed the door, hoping the loud noise would signal to them that he wanted to be alone. He went to the sink, washing his face and drying it off, before repeating the process 9 more times. He needed to feel clean until his face was raw, he needed to feel clean right now or else he'd break down. He looked at his reflection loathingly, he was too sensitive. He used to be able to quip right back at Richies harmless, if not annoying jokes easily, but it's been harder for him lately. He just couldn't think straight enough to respond and not get offended, not feel like he was being verbally attacked.

He slowly went and sat in Bill's tub, his knees once again folding to meet his chest. He rested his face down on them, trying to not think, trying to breathe and calm down. He stayed there, unthinking. After half an hour he heard his friends converse quietly down the hall, probably talking about how to approach him. *Probably talking bad about him.* He was too tired to deny the intrusive thought, it was very likely statistically.

A sudden rush of determination surged through him, he wasn't going to let them come in and see him curled up in Bills tub, he was going to go out there and face them, he wasn't going to humiliate himself further. He stood shaking, blood rushing from his head and making him dizzy, but he stepped out of the tub anyway, taking a deep breath and walking to the door. He opened it, revealing a wide eyed Richie, arm up about to knock. Eddie gave a polite smile, slipping past him. He was going to act normal.

"Hey Eddie, I'm sorry about-"

"It's fine Richie, I just overreacted." Eddie said calmly, tightly. He went past the rest of his friends into Bill's room, beginning to grab his backpack and stuff his clothes into it. Richie followed, lingering at the doorway while Eddie collected his things.

"Are you sure you're okay Eds? I went a little too far and I didn't

mean to hurt your feelings.” Richie mumbled, looking like a kicked dog. He was scared, that Eddie was acting so strangely.

Eddie stopped packing for a minute, turning slowly to look at him and Richie could see the barely concealed panic. “Its okay.” Eddie said tensely, “I’m *fine*.” He grabbed the last of his things, going out to the hallway to see his friends, anxiously awaiting. “I have to go, my mom wants me back by lunchtime.” He said stiffly, before turning and going quickly down the stairs, his friends mumbling concerned goodbyes and see you later. Richie was the only one who followed, he saw Eddie open the door as he stood at the edge of the stairway,

“Eds, wait-” The door slammed shut. Richie stood there, shocked, before wiping his tears off his cheek roughly, going back up to the rest of his friends, dizzy with guilt.

Notes for the Chapter:

Poor kids!! Eddie didn't want to hurt his friends he's just not being the most rational!'-(- also yes Mike and Bev are now a thing too NO-ONE CAN STOP ME. Ben is tired of all these lovebirds smh

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie walks home and meets a nice woman, he also meets an old enemy.

Notes for the Chapter:

****WARNING**** TRIGGER WARNING, this chapter has a hallucination with non-consensual aspects, nothing sexual happens but there's graphic dialogue and touching before he gets out of it.

Eddie walked out of the house as quickly as he could, not even bothering to get his bike from Bill's backyard. He was boiling with anger and shame, he was so *stupid* and he hurt his friends, he hurt Richie because of a harmless joke. "Why?" He mumbled angrily at himself. Over and over again before he stopped and screamed in frustration, throwing his bag to the ground, standing over it and panting. He wanted to do something to make him forget about this, so he would stop the thoughts hating him. He dragged his backpack to the sidewalk, sitting down and opening it, taking out all of his things.

"Just keep it clean, keep it neat." He said lightly to himself, folding his clothes in the middle of the sidewalk. He would fold a shirt, see a crease and repeat, until it was smooth. When he began to pack it again there would be uneven weight, so he would take all of his things out, refold them and try again. He sat, in the middle of folding a pair of shorts when a lady came out with a watering bowl for her plants. It was early fall, already cold, but somehow her garden was thriving, flowers bright and happy reaching towards the sun. He fixated on the flowers, his polite and kind nature taking over,

"Your garden is beautiful, miss." He said genuinely, she stood from tending to her plants, giving him a warm smile. She was middle aged, her brown hair tucked into a sunhat. She dusted off her apron, kneeling beside him,

"Thank you sweetheart, what're you doing in the middle of the sidewalk?" She asked, concerned but keeping her voice warm and enthusiastic. He thrived under the positive attention, hungry for it from what he lacked from his own mother, whose main priority was to keep him home,

"Rearranging my bag before I head home, I just came from my friends house up the road at the corner." She nodded, looking up to the direction he came from,

"Bill Denbrough?" He nodded, she smiled, a bit of sadness peeking though, "He's a sweet boy, what happened to his brother was horrible." Eddie perked up at that, surprised she brought it up, most adults in Derry happily ignored the high rate of children's death. He sat in comfortable silence, packing his bag while she looked down the road lost in thought.

"Yeah," he agreed earnestly, checking the weight of his bag before freezing. Under her apron was Pennywise's suit. He shook his head but it remained, how did he not see it before? His stomach lurched in fear, her face turned away from him, she turned back with the wicked red smile and teeth, her face changing to the leper.

"Eddie, Eddie, Eddie," It chastised, crawling towards him now on four legs. He was frozen in fear, the drumming of his heart louder than anything he'd ever heard. *"If all I had to do was make a nice woman with a sweet voice to make you trust me, you'd be the earliest floater of the group!"*

It laughed maniacally, mucus spewing onto his face as it now loomed over him, holding him by his shoulders to the ground. His shoulders burned, and he could smell the disease, the sickness. A thick spew of saliva dripped into his eyes from the grotesque smile and he let out a cry, screwing his eyes shut as tightly as he could, holding back sobs that would just encourage It, his fingers grabbing at the concrete, scraping them painfully until he felt them bleed. *"You still want me to blow ya, Eddie? I'll blow you right up til you're floating with me. It'll feel so good, Eddie,"* It said, a hand moving to the waistline of his shorts. *"And just for you, I'll do it for free."* He whined loudly in fear, feeling it's scabbed fingers curl to pull down his shorts-

“Sweetheart! Baby, are you alright?” He opened his eyes to the kind woman, concern written over her face. He shuddered, still processing what had just happened, his chest desperately heaving. He was safe, it wasn't real. He eventually nodded weakly, sitting back up. She rubbed his back slowly, there were silent tears streaming down his face,

“Do you need me to call the hospital, are you alright?” He shook his head quickly, having yet another conversation with the hospital staff that knew him by name was not what he needed. She searched his face, “Was it a hallucination, sweetie?” She asked and he hesitantly nodded, not meeting her eyes. “It's okay that it was, I don't think you're crazy.” She said evenly, he looked up, face scrunched in confusion.

“Wait... who are you?” He croaked, “I've never seen you around.”

“My names Martha. I just moved here with my wife,” Eddie's eyes widened further, but not in disgust, in genuine curiosity. She was so open about being.. gay. “She hallucinates too, little one, she came back from serving in the Army and it messed the way her brain thinks up. She has nightmares and gets scared of the fireworks, like the ones last night.” She stated evenly, searching his eyes, “You should be getting home kiddo,” she said, scruffling his hair. He didn't hate it, it was comforting, “But anytime you have a hard time like today you can come help me with gardening, I'll even pay you with fresh lemonade.” She said, winking slyly. He laughed, distracted for the moment. She stood, helping him up with a swift pull of his arm.

“Thank you, Mrs. Martha.” He said happily, beginning to walk off. She kindly waved him goodbye. It was only 3 blocks away that he remembered the leper. He cried.

Notes for the Chapter:

I am pretty proud of this chapter, and funny enough Mrs. Martha was inspired by a woman I saw walking home today! Her garden was beautiful, I wanted to create a new character that could give Eddie some insight and warmth:)

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie gets home and cleans up, only for a friend to show up at his door.

Notes for the Chapter:

Ahhh I'm sorry this took so long to write! School was busy and my inspiration went down a but, but I'm focused on continuing this story!

When he finally reached his home, chest heaving, it was much later in the day, the sun beginning it's graceful swoop to kiss the trees. His bag slid off of his shoulders and he numbly dragged it with him to the door. He sighed, hesitating before opening the door cautiously, 'Hey Mommy, I'm home!' He called out, his throat burning with anxiety and exhaustion, waiting for a good ten seconds when he didn't see her sitting in her usual spot. No response. She must've been out. He sighed in relief, walking to the kitchen and slinging his bag onto the table, rustling through the cabinet and finding his glass, filling it with water. He began to chug it before stopping to take safer sips, he could choke easily with how heavily he was breathing. He felt miserable, and he couldn't tell if he was so tired because of the walk or the leper. He pushed those thoughts away, seeing blood glide off of the side of his glass. Shit, he forgot about that.

He left his bag in the kitchen, putting his cup in the sink before going up to his room and getting a pair of clean clothes and a towel before going to shower. He usually wouldn't do this, he thought absently while turning the tap to the coldest setting. Showering while home alone was *dangerous*, running the risk of slipping and falling, or being unable to defend yourself from an attacker, but at the moment the sweat burning his entire body took priority and he couldn't bring himself to care.

He showered as quickly as one who sanitizes their entire body could, well, he wouldn't be void of germs, but he would be rid of most harmful ones and of his own sweat and dead skin cells, which made

him feel better. He stepped out of the shower and dried off, wrapping it around his waist, he needed to clean and bandage his hands before putting on his clothes, the risk of blood dripping onto them too high for him to risk. He knelt and reached under his sink and pulled out a jug of Hydrogen Peroxide, cotton balls and band-aids, sitting down with his legs folded underneath him in the middle of the bathroom, happy to be distracted by a task rather than think.

He had already cleaned his hands as well as he could in the shower, rinsing off the excess blood and clipping off the chipped nails that he could, yes, he did have his nail clippers in his shower, wanting to contain most of his bodily care routine in a place he could easily sanitize every night. He grimaced at his fingers now that he had a good look of them. The concrete had certainly took its toll, the tips of his fingers raw and throbbing painfully, and some of his fingernails so short he couldn't clip them if he tried. While he couldn't control what was happening to him he *could* control was keeping his body clean and free from illness. So, taking a deep breath he unscrewed the bottle open, putting a cotton ball at the top and tipping it forward,

“Fucking shit,” He spat to himself, he hadn't even begun working the cleaning agent in, but the littlest amount of contact from the back of the cotton ball made him grimace in discomfort. He was about to focus on the albeit painful task at hand when his doorbell rung. He sprung up immediately, the hair on the back of his neck standing. He got up from his sitting position, pulling on his clothes quickly and grabbing his canister of pepper spray from his room, you could never be too careful. He slunk down the stairs, making sure he wouldn't be visible by the slightly opaque windows on the sides of the door. He nearly reached it when the person knocked again, Eddie jumping in surprise. He looked out the peephole and let out a sigh that was a mixture of relief and dread. It was Stan.

He unlocked the 3 deadlocks on the door and opened it hesitantly. Stan perked up, looking genuinely surprised that it was Eddie and not Ms. K yelling. Eddie gulped at the silence when Stan didn't immediately speak, a cool gust of air blowing inside, “Hey Stan,”

“Hey idiot.” He said with a smile, his voice warm, holding no malice “How're you doing?” Eddie shrugged, looking down at the leaves

threatening to enter his home. Stan continued, a little quieter, "We're all here for you, you know that right?" Eddie nodded,

"Yeah, of course I do.." He said, but when Stan didn't move to say goodbye or walk off he understood his intention, finally looking up to meet his eyes, "Do you wanna come inside? We can talk a little." Stan nodded, slipping past his friend and trotting up the stairs like he lived there, Eddie following in suit after locking his door again. Confusion rung in his head, why did Stan come? He was expecting Richie, maybe Bill, but not Stan. It's not that they weren't close, he loves Stan, he's like the brother he never had, but Stan was pretty non confrontational, and hadn't really pushed about all of this stuff in the first place. He went straight to the bathroom with the intent to put his medical stuff away, but Stan already saw it, his nose slightly scrunching like it always did when he was confused,

"What's this for?" He asked, only seeing Eddie's hands when he finished the sentence. Instead of asking him what happened or looking at it with any sort of surprise he just sighed dramatically, going into the bathroom without even the slightest tone of actual upset. Eddie quizzically followed. Stan washed his hands up to his elbows thoroughly, drying them off with a clean towel before scooping all of the items into his arms, gesturing to Eddie's room, "Come on Eddie," he said with fake exasperation, "let's go to your room so I can play doctor." Eddie was about to say it wasn't necessary and that he'd do it himself but Stan was already walking down the hallway to his friends room. Eddie huffed, he was never quite able to stop Stan once he put his mind to something.

Stan sat on Eddie's bed and patted the spot next to him, to which Eddie followed. There was tension in the air but neither of them immediately addressed it, Stan busying himself with preparing a cotton ball. He moved and pressed the cotton ball on the wound, Eddie's face scrunching up in clear discomfort,

"Sorry Eddie," Stan mumbled, wrapping that finger with a piece of gauze and a band aid securing it. He continued with the next finger, and Eddie needed to talk about *something* to distract him,

"So," He said awkwardly, "How was everyone when I left?" *Wrong thing to ask, stupid.* Stan took it in stride, not having to look up at

Eddie to see his panic, his fingers shaking told him well enough.

"Well, they were all worried about you. They all wanted to come see you, especially Richie, but I knew that that would just freak you out more." He said simply, already done with Eddie's first hand before taking the other, Eddie sat, the frown on his face from more than the pain of the peroxide on his finger.

"I'm sorry, Stan. I'm sorry I hurt everyone." He mumbled, tears beginning to drop and slide down his cheeks. Stan looked up, his heart sinking in sadness seeing his friend like this. He wanted to make a joke, make Eddie feel better, but he wasn't Richie, he couldn't provide that type of comfort. So instead he held the hand that was already treated, giving it a reassuring yet gentle squeeze.

"You shouldn't be. That sort of thing happens to all of us sometimes." He said, barely pausing before asking, "Do you know why it was me that came instead of anyone else?" Eddie shook his head gently, the stream of tears lessening its pain on him. Stan's heart pounded in his chest, but he said it before he could chicken out. "I've been dealing with the stuff you have... the constant fear. Like It's gonna get you. I've seen stuff that isn't there because I get so scared." He sighed, the pressure leaving his chest as he finally shared what he had been hiding for months. Eddie slowly looked up at him, shock peeking through the guilty expression on his face.

"Really?" He croaked, and Stan nodded,

"Yeah. I try to ignore it, but there's times I can't." Stan said, his voice wavering, "Times I won't go down to the barrens with you guys because it's too much for me," Eddie nodded, the puzzle pieces clicking in his head, there had been times Stan wasn't with them, but he thought it was because he was sick or in temple. A pang of guilt and shame went through him. *You're not the only one in the group that suffered.* Eddie sighed, trying to keep the negative thoughts at bay, *Stan experienced so much worse, the clown nearly killed him. A broken arm is nothing severe. Its pathetic.* His breath quickened, and Stan frowned, quickly realizing what was happening.

"Eddie, breathe slow, it's okay." He said almost pleadingly, a hand on Eddie's shoulder as he saw his friend's face contorted in panic. Eddie

doubled over, clutching at his chest. He was having an asthma attack. Stan leaped off of Eddie's bed, "Wheres your inhaler?" He yelled, not seeing Eddie's bag. Eddie took in a gulping breath, shaking unsteadily like a sapling in a storm.

"Do..wn," He struggled to speak, tears pricking at his eyes. Stan looking at him with wide attentive eyes.

"Downstairs! It's okay Eddie, I'll be right back!" He yelled, already half down the stairs in search of Eddie's bag. Eddie sat on his bed, shaking, trying to rub his chest to stimulate airflow, trying to but it was all too much, panic starting to truly grip him as he couldn't take another breath. He sat with wide eyes, his mouth open but chest unmoving. Tears ran down his face at the sheer terror, this was the worst asthma attack he'd had in years, his hand grasping his own shirt uselessly as his sight slowly became blurred, head dizzy from the lack of oxygen. He saw Stan run in and jump onto the bed in front of him, felt the inhaler at his lips, taking in a deep breath, blinking slowly. Stan was speaking to him but his voice sounded far away. Muffled. Eddie took in another breath, trying to say he was okay when he closed his eyes, slumping down into Stans' arms before slipping out of consciousness.

Notes for the Chapter:

This cliffhanger sucks and ur probably yelling but itll be OK! Stan is an angel who loves his friends, I love writing their dynamic:)

7. Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie wakes up to a confusing situation.

Notes for the Chapter:

Another one!! Working on chapter 8

Eddie woke up with a gasp, sitting up so fast his head spun. He blinked the sleep out of his eyes, his head throbbing with the beginnings of a headache. He just sat, his mind going over the events that happened earlier, but he did his best to ignore the self deprecating feelings attempting to crawl their way up his throat. He finally sighed, moving to get out of bed and standing slowly, letting himself steady before grabbing the first pair of shorts and shirt, cleanly pressed, from his drawer, pulling his shirt over his head when a thought sprung. *Where was Stan?* his brows furrowed, he put on his shorts, looking down to see his fingers clean and showing no evidence of injury, the crescent moons of his fingernails healthy. His heart began to beat a bit faster, confusion and fear coming to the forefront of his mind. He looked around his room, it seemed normal, almost *too* normal. “Mom?” He called out when he peeked out his window, her car in the driveway comforting him.

“Downstairs, Eddie!”

He smiled, slightly relaxing. He grabbed his fanny pack and strapped it on, he might’ve not taken the placebic medicine anymore, but he still had his rescue inhaler, and even a small first aid kit. He was comforted by those items, making him feel more safe and secure.

“*Eddie!*” His mom called from downstairs, her voice on the line between impatient and angry.

“Coming!” He called back, walking across his room and stepping out of his it, hand still on the knob, wanting none other than to run back in and shut it. The hallway wasn’t his owns, which floor was carpeted, and the wallpaper a deep maroon. Instead the floors were

wooden and splintered, light streaming in from broken windows. Fear deemed him silent when he realized where he was. Not in his own, safe, clean house. He was in the Neibolt house, and the spiderwebs and moldy air weren't the least of fears in his mind.

He spun to go back into his room, but it wasn't his, instead the room contained a half of a limp body, the body of Betty Ripsom staring up at him with glassy eyes and a bloody smile. Her face long decayed and rotted, maggots writhing in her ripped open cheek.. He screamed in terror, running down the hallway as he heard the sickening dull drag of her moving her body forward, a guttural inhuman laugh escaping her. He reached the stairs when she grabbed his ankle, making him fall forward and down the tall stairway into the next floor, running and tripping again as her body fell lifelessly down the stairs after him,

"Didn't wanna end up like me, Eddie?" She spat, long arms, which were barely so, more of a mangled skeleton with hanging flesh, helping her crawl forward, he let out a whimper, scrambling away from her into a corner, blood dripping down his face and into his eyes. His heart was drumming in his ears, his whole body shaking and in pain, bruises already starting to form. She crawled close, her head at his knees

"Didn't want to end up like *Georgie*?" He let out a cry, kicking her square in the head, hoping that she'd stop. The sickening crack of her neck rang in his ears, and she slowly turned her head back to him, which was now grossly hanging off of her shoulders, only rotting muscle keeping it intact. She reached out and grabbed his leg, pulling him closer. He was frozen in fear, only able to watch as she smiled, teeth shining brightly through the otherwise decayed flesh. She grasped his leg with both of her hands and sunk her teeth into it, making him wail in pain.

She ripped the meat off of his leg, his head spinning in horror as he saw and tried to process what was happening, his blood now steadily flowing and painting the floor red, what Betty would call a long needed redecorating, his leg throbbing with unspeakable pain. He looked down, breathing and exhaling shuddering breaths, seeing the bone, *part of his leg missing*. He screamed, tears and snot and drool all leaving him as horrific cries wracked his entire body, shaking weakly.

He just wanted this to *stop*. “P-please,” he spat, blood beginning to pool in his mouth and spill over, he was scared and *tired*, so tired. Betty looked up from stroking the wound in a comforting manner. She smiled, and if she wasn’t a rotting corpse eating his leg off, he would’ve felt sad for her.

“*I know*, Eddie. It’s scary. I was scared too.” She said sincerely, her hand going to cup his face, maggots crawling their way onto him, in his hair, *under his skin*. “It’ll be over soon, Eddie. Then you can sleep. Not worry about any of this anymore, like me. Okay?” She said, getting the slightest of nods from Eddie, he just didn’t want to be scared anymore. Her other hand went up to his face in a comforting in an embrace, her thumb brushing away his tears, he felt comforted, her warm human eyes hypnotically peering through the grotesque body, he felt more safe than he ever had in his entire life, before her grip tightened and she snapped his neck.

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He awoke with a scream, writhing in terror as his heart threatened to stop. This was too much, *too much*. He felt arms on him and screamed louder, trying to push and shove the person off of him, away, still feeling the sting of Betty’s hands on his skin. His chest heaved in heavy breaths as the attacker grasped his shoulders, his screams dying down to choked gasps. Noises other than his heartbeat were slowly filtering their way through his panic, including a voice he knew. *Stan*. “Eddie!” Stan’s voice finally rang through and made him open his eyes, not seeing Pennywise, or Betty, or the Leper. It was Stan, holding Eddie’s arms as he began to still, his eyes still wide and breath winding down, just short of erratic.

He lied here for a moment, just looking up at Stanley, an anchor to the world as he began to process what had happened. A nightmare. He and Stan shared a look for what felt like forever until he broke, letting Stan hug him and hold him together as he sobbed, his hands grasping at Stan’s shoulder and back, it was real, Stan was real. They lied together for a long time, until Eddie’s cries went quiet. Stan slowly sat back up from embracing his friend, his own eyes red with tears. It made Eddie’s heart lurch in shame. He sat up next to him slowly and began to speak, his voice raw, “I’m sor-”

"Don't." Stan said, looking at Eddie seriously through pained eyes, tears beginning to stream down his cheeks. "Don't you ever apologize for this ever again. Don't tell me you're okay when you're not." Stan's voice rose in anger, not at Eddie but at life, at the horrible situation fate had put them through, "Why did you lie to us? Why did you hide this?" Eddie just sat there as Stan cried,

"Because I don't want you to see me like this." Eddie croaked, his face red with shame as he put a consoling hand on Stan's shoulder. "I don't want to hurt you guys more than I already *have*, okay? I feel like total shit when I hurt you guys. Sometimes I wish I-" He shut his mouth, looking to the ground. Stan turned to face him,

"Wish you what?" Stan asked, his voice and eyes so serious and concerned that Eddie crumpled under them, his hand dropping with a soft thud to his comforter.

"Sometimes I wish that I just died.. in the sewers, I wish I wasn't here anymore because I don't want to feel like this, I don't want to hurt you." Eddie sighed out, his voice numb. Stan's face contorted in pain at hearing that, hearing Eddie so broken and deflated, he wanted nothing more than to take Eddie's pain away. The air was static with the heaviness of the conversation, Stan trying to collect his thoughts, his bottom lip trembling. Eddie wanted to ask him to leave, wanted to shut the door and act like this never happened. But he already told Stan. It'd be as much of a help as trying to light a match on an ice cube. The windows were black with night, if Eddie listened close enough he heard the crickets contently chirping away, oblivious to the heavy confession he just made. He envied them.

"I love you, Eddie." Stan finally said, Eddie looking back at him from his faraway gaze at the window, "We all do. And we are so happy that you- that you fought to stay with us. That you're still fighting to." Stan said, his voice breaking at the implications of his words, even when he knew they were true. Eddie nodded, giving Stan the best smile he could. "Just please, *please* keep fighting." He pleaded.

"I will," Eddie said, but his voice was so tired it felt empty, his eyes drooping from the exhaustion of waking up. Stan stood abruptly, to go, leave Eddie so he could think. "Please don't." Eddie blurted out suddenly, and Stan turned back to look at him from the door, his

heart once again aching as his friend sat alone, looking fragile and ready to break despite his strength. "I don't want to see her again." Eddie begged, his chest tight with fear which was now bringing him back from his state of numbness, his hand went to touch his calf, to make sure it was still fully there. Stan nodded without a second thought, turning Eddie's light off and crawling into bed next to him, "Thank you," Eddie whispered, fear leaving his body with a sigh, his breathing finally steady as opposed to the offbeat mess it was moments ago. Stan reached forward and kissed his friend's forehead before lying back into the soft comforter, love for his friend filling his chest as he silently vowed to keep Eddie safe, to help him.

"Anytime, loser." He mumbled back. Eddie barely smiled and settled back down, falling asleep within the minute due to the exhaustion of the day. Stan sighed, looking up at the ceiling, glad he was there when he was, otherwise... he didn't let his mind drift further into the scary line of thought, closing his eyes and falling asleep too. Neither of them dreamed of a scary thing, and the rest of that night was peaceful, the crickets softly singing through their sleep.

Notes for the Chapter:

Im sorryyyyyy its so sad. My friends have messaged me all mad with the last few chapters lol. I am actually really proud of the concept, Eddie seeing betty as all the things he didn't want to be. Comments and kudos appreciated!!!:) Stan and Eddie friendship is what I live for man

8. Chapter 8

Summary for the Chapter:

The Losers all have fun at the barrens

Notes for the Chapter:

I needed some happy in this fic.... little did I know
that it's like 3,000 words oops

Eddie woke up to the morning sun saying it's hello through his window, rays of light blessing his room so beautifully it felt holy. He, on the other hand, wasn't. He sat up slowly, feeling his muscles groan from the sudden work. Stan's stuff was still here, but he wasn't in the room. Eddie rubbed his eyes tiredly, slowly swinging his legs out of bed, looking down at his calf for a minute too long before getting up. "Stan?" he called out, curious but fairly at ease. He heard steps up his stairway and then Stan peeked his head in, a tentatively excited look on his face.

"Hey Eddie, the losers are outside, they wanted to go to the barrens and wanted to ask if you wanted to come, imagine the surprise when it was me that answered the door." Stan said, stifling a laugh, remembering their surprised faces. Eddie couldn't help but smile, a flicker of doubt went across his face, if he really wanted to face his friends after what he had done. But they understood, they weren't angry. He wanted to do stuff, have fun.

"Sure, let me get dressed." He said with a smile, rising carefully and going to his dresser, pulling out clothes. Stan closed the door so Eddie could be alone while he dressed. It was then that he noticed his other hand was bandaged up, Stan must've done it when he was asleep after the asthma attack. He pulled on the usual outfit of his choice, shorts and a shirt, but he saw that it must've been chilly out because Stan was wearing a coat, he looked around his room, none of his sweaters were to be found along with his pants, probably in his mother's room because she would like him to ask her before he went somewhere so she could guilt him into staying home. He grimaced at the thought and stood there, thinking carefully before a memory

popped into his head.

He opened the last drawer of his dresser and it was an assortment of his friend's things that they had left behind or given to him. Beverly had left him the latest edition of his favorite comics, Mike had given him a rock he found on the river of his farm, it was clear and a little purple, it was beautiful. Ben had left him an interesting book on common medical first aid, Eddie had read it at least 5 times, even though he already knew all of its contents. Bill gave him a load of coins for the arcade down the road, he knew it was one of Eddie's places to go when he needed alone time. Stan gave him a birdwatching book, hoping to reel him into his own hobby. Eddie only went out with him birdwatching 3 or 4 times a month, but when he did, he knew every type of bird they saw, making Stan smile. He liked to make his friends happy. Finally, there was Richie's sweater, which he had presumably left there on accident, because his keepsake to Eddie was a mixtape of Eddie's favorite songs. Without a second thought he pulled it over his head and slipped his arms through, the black sweater mottled with bits of grey. It was oversized on him, so he folded the sleeves up to rest above his hands. He grabbed his pack and was out the door.

All of his friend's eyes were on him. He felt like he was meeting them all for the first time again. They all had gentle smiles, all but Richie, who had a big smile plastered on his face. "Spaghetti!!! Glad to see ya!" He said, one hand holding his bike and the other holding Eddie's up. Eddie smiled, touched that they brought his bike for him, it was a long walk to his house.

"Hey guys," Eddie said back, walking and taking his bike from Richie's hand, their eyes searching each other before looking away. Richie's eyes drifted down, an even more shitfaced grin adorning his face,

"Awwwww, Eddie you're wearing my sweater!" He said, the sparkle in his eyes looking genuine, making Eddie's face heat up,

"Yeah dipshit, next time try not to stretch the sleeves while your jacking off because they end at my knees." Richie laughed, all of the losers glad that Eddie's spitfire humor was still evident back to his jokes, at least for now.

"Now now, Eds, maybe it's a little stretched but have you forgotten that you're 5'3? Any sweater not in the kids section is gonna be big." Eddie rolled his eyes, it was true, Richie was nearly 6'0 so anything of his would dwarf Eddie, the rest of the group watching the interaction amiably.

"H-hey Stan, w-why d-d-id you answer the d-door? D-did you come over to his h-house early?" Bill asked absentmindedly as he mounted silver, the rest of them following suit, biking slowly out of Eddie's neighborhood.

"Nah, I slept over with him last night," He said simply, swerving to dodge a rock that would've made him crash into the pavement.

"That's nice," Beverly said kindly, being the mother hen of the group only slightly moreso than Bill. They all hummed in agreement, well all but Richie. Richie just peddled forward, looking at the road as opposed to Stan. He had the smallest of scowls, feeling a pang of.. jealousy? Why would he be jealous that Stan helped Eddie through a hard time?*Because you'd rather it have been you.* Richie huffed, knowing that his rude thoughts were true. *That's not fair. Stan is one of your best friends.* But the feelings remained, and he biked in tandem with Eddie til they got to the Barrens, then he was over it. Beverly was the first to leap off her bike gracefully, letting it clatter onto the gravel as she pranced into the tall grass and underbrush.

"Wait up, Ripley!" Richie squeaked dramatically, "You don't want us to get eaten alive do ya?" The rest of them got off their bikes too, putting them in a haphazard pile. Eddie shook his head with a sigh, walking in between Stan and Bill a step ahead of Eddie.

"If I have to deal with your stupid jokes all day I will happily become alien food." He said curtly, whipping his head around to give Richie a mischievous glance. Today was a cold day, the cloud cover giving the air no grace to warm up. Eddie quickly regretted his decision to wear shorts, mentally giving a 'fuck you' to his mother and her stupid antics to keep him inside. He walked faster, nearly jogging to catch up with Beverly who was several yards ahead of the rest of them. She slowed a bit when he skidded to a stop next to her, taking a puff of his inhaler before settling and the both of them walking, he heard Richie yell some nonsense about Bev being out of his league but he

ignored it.

“How ya doin, Kane?” Beverly asked affectionately. Eddie scoffed, playfully shoving her shoulder, still a bit out of breath,

“Please... if anyone were to be Kane.. it would be Richie. He’d mack on a facehugger willingly.” He breathed out, Beverly giving him one of her blank looks before laughing, shaking her head.

“You’re absolutely right Eddie,” She said, smiling. He felt at ease, Beverly was, as spiky as her exterior may seem to others, the one that made Eddie relax the easiest. They walked around a bend, now not visible to their friends. “Hey, about yesterday,” She said, pausing when she saw Eddie visibly stiffen. “We all understand, we’re not mad at you.” She said carefully, her shoes loudly crunching on the rocks and leaves under her feet as they walked. Eddie didn’t meet her gaze for a long time, and when he did his eyes were welled with tears,

“I’m sorry Bev,” He mumbled, and she stopped suddenly, pulling him into a hug. He tightly clung to her, taking in a breath as he willed himself not to cry, she smelled sweet, like the berries that grew down by the river. She pulled back from the hug, her hands cupping his face, but unlike Betty, who was rotting and cold, her hands were warm and her face alive, looking seriously into his face.

“It’s okay, Eddie. We’re all here for you.” He nodded, visibly calming down, their eye contact bonding them closer than they ever were before. She gave him another brief hug, and they continued walking, the rest of the losers just coming around the bend. Eddie was grateful Beverly kept it to the two of them. They finally reached the low ridge above of the river and all sat on the cool rocks, seeing the frigid water run steadily below their feet. They all sat in comfortable silence for awhile, looking at the trees and the birds and the sky as cool gusts of air ruffled all of their hair. Mike, Beverly, and Eddie all sitting close together. Bill, Stan, and Ben sitting in a semicircle, Ben in the middle attentively writing in his journal, Stan mumbling about the bird that flew past. Bill just sat, happy and content that all of his friends were here, and they were okay.

“The river is pretty,” Richie mused, looking at the blue water flow

steadily past them with a sincere look of wonder. The rest of the group's faces scrunched in alert, knowing he was up to something. "Who wants to come look at it with me, it'll be fun!" He said, rising enthusiastically, all of his friends looking up at him with disdain in their eyes.

"Richie, noone is falling for that, we all know that you're gonna push whoever comes with you into the water." Stan said, Richie shook his head theatrically,

"Stanley Uris!" He gasped, a hand coming up to his chest, his voice akin to a southern bell, "I am *appaled* by the insinuation!" Ben perked up from writing in his journal, leaning forward with a hint of mock in his smile,

"Good job Rich! You used a big word." Richie stuck his tongue out at Ben, crossing his arms.

"Why is everyone ganging up on *me*? I am doing nothing more than trying to be a good friend and admire nature with you guys!"

"A good friend wouldn't give their other friend hypothermia." Eddie quipped casually, his legs tucked under his sweater.

"Oh shut up sweater turtle, I don't even need to push you in, you're cold enough. With the shorts, and more importantly your rude rude words to me." Richie said, his face with mock hurt. "I guess I'll go by myself then, because you all are content just sitting here in silence while there are things to be explored! Farewell comrades, for I will never cross paths with your boring asses again!" He said with a salute, walking down the steeper rocks below the ridge and actually just sitting down at the edge of the river, his hands in the water.

Eddie looked down, a twinge of doubt in his chest. Maybe Richie *was* telling the truth, and he just wanted company. He untucked his legs from the sweater and rose, "I'll be back guys." He said, focused. Beverly hummed,

"Careful Eddie, don't want the turtle to get in the water." He looked back and gave her a joking glare, before laughing.

“Yeah yeah, if Richie pushes Eddie in the water he’s getting a slap upside the head.” Stan said, smiling. It was nice, all their worries at the moment being if one of them gets pushed in the water. They were all relaxed, Bill looking over Bens writing with a smile, pointing out a sentence he liked, Stan watching them affectionately. Beverly and Mike sitting together, holding hands. They were all happy with their friends, possibly more than friends, but they were all happy and that’s all that mattered. He smiled, and went down the steep rocks, sliding down and barely avoiding falling on his butt. Richie sat still, facing away from Eddie. Eddie walked over slowly and sat down next to him, their knees touching.

“Hey turtle,” Richie said, looking at him with a twinge of fondness through the sarcasm. Eddie rolled his eyes,

“Hey dickwad,” He said back, but his words held no malice, they sat content for awhile, the birds overhead chirping, before Richie looked back at him again,

“Your nose looks like shit,” He said bluntly, looking at Eddie’s bruised broken nose, a splint keeping it as straight as possible. Eddie shrugged,

“Yeah, that happens when you go headfirst into concrete.” Eddie said, his smile genuine but a little uneasy, memories beginning to trickle down behind his eyes-

“Hey, remember when I got roadrash all over my right side?” Richie asked loudly, interrupting the thoughts.

Eddie did remember, it was a dare, well Richie actually dared himself to go down the steepest road in Derry with a blindfold after they all were drinking on the hill, the dark of the night concealing their break of the curfew and the alcohol Richie took from his dad. They all tried to persuade him not to but Richie was tipsy and determined, and none of them were surprised when he trudged back up the hill, his face, right arm and right leg bloody and covered in dirt. Eddie had dragged Richie to his house later that night, sitting him down in the tub and cleaning the wounds rigorously, Richie was mumbling incoherently, truly shitfaced at that moment, about his mom’s drinking, til he finally looked up at Eddie with tearful eyes, telling

him he didn't want to end up like his mother. Eddie was sure Richie didn't remember that part of it because he had an obnoxiously wide grin.

"Yeah, you looked like the old meat the butcher throws out, and I was the one that had to spray you down like an animal" Eddie said and they both laughed, falling back again into a content silence. Eddie was surprised, and thought this was a little odd. Sure, Richie reached out to him at Bill's house, which was the most genuine moment they had ever had, but Richie was being genuine right now, and Eddie was wondering why. Come to think of it Richie had been acting different around Eddie, the loud trashmouth boy as always with their friends, but when it was just the two of them, Richie was different, still a little asshole, but he looked at Eddie with an emotion he couldn't identify. But he was his best friend, and they were happy. Richie took Eddie's hand, Eddie's heart buzzed for a moment before the feeling was gone, filled with curiosity. But he didn't pull away.

"Y'know," Richie said, his gaze far away, his thumb absently rubbing Eddie's hand. "The animals around here are really beautiful," He said seriously, his grip on Eddie's hand gently tightening. Eddie was still confused, but stayed silent. "And it makes me think- it's a shame to see a turtle out of the water," Richie said with a mischievous look peeking to Eddie from his glasses, and Eddie finally realized what was happening, jumping back from the edge of the water, Richie laughing evilly. Eddie fell down backwards onto the ground, trying his best to escape the current fate of possible hypothermia. Richie was just laughing, following him down to the ground, Eddie pushed Richie by his shoulders, turning so that he was the one pinning Richie to the ground, both of them breathing heavily. "Come on, I'm doing the community good and releasing an animal back into its habitat." Richie pleaded, fire in his eyes.

"You're evil Tozier," Eddie hissed, looking down at Richie "There is no way you're pushing me into the water, I will die before that happens." Richie just smirked, easily wrestling Eddie until he was back on top, pinning Eddie's hands above his head. Eddie could feel his face turn red, his heart beating in an odd way. He didn't know why.

"Like you could win," Richie mumbled, but the attitude changed,

Eddie looking up at him, his hair messy and cheeks red. Hell, he was wearing Richie's sweater. Richie gulped, his heart beating quickly as they stayed there silent. Richie's eyes flicked down to Eddie's lips, his heart lurching in a pain he couldn't identify. Little did both of them know, their friends were peeking over the ridge at the interaction.

"I bet they're gonna be a thing," Beverly whispered, eyes wide as she peeked over the grass while leaning on the edge of the ridge, Ben and Stan nodding. What they were doing was comical, really, all 5 of them practically piled on top of each other to sneakily observe their other friends.

"Yeah, I've watched Richie send Eddie puppy eyes for the last few months, plus eyes that were... more suggestive." Ben said, the sentence dying off awkwardly.

"Plus, when I said I spent the night at Eddie's earlier he gave me a glare." Stan interjected.

"How about a bet guys? I say 30 bucks they'll get together," She said with a smirk, Ben agreeing.

"N-no way R-Richie likes Eddie, t-they always bicker." Bill huffed, making Beverly laugh.

"Bickering is practically Richie offhandedly flirting with Eddie, its funny to watch." She said, giggling but quieting when she accidentally pushed a rock off the ridge. By the time she looked again they were sitting up, Richie helping Eddie dust off the sweater, before Eddie was giving both of them a healthy amount of hand sanitizer. "God, they are such a couple!" She laughed with delight. Mike shrugged, unsure on his position on this bet.

"Well if Richie likes Eddie, why doesn't Eddie reciprocate?" He asked, Bill nodding in agreement with him, glad that he wasn't the only one doubtful.

"Eddie is probably the most oblivious boy in Derry, Richie could ask him out and Eddie would think it was as friends." Bev said, her goofy smile still prevalent. Stan's eyes widened, seeing the both of them approaching.

"Guys, Peep show is over!" He whispered, They all sprang up and scrambled back to their previous spots, looking as casual as possible when Richie climbed back up.

"Hey kiddos!" Richie said with a smile, before turning to help Eddie get up, when he turned back his eyes were sad. "I tried to be a good samaritan and help this turtle go back to the wild, but it seems he is determined to live with humans, I guess I'll have to keep him...I'll name him Eds." Richie said with a smile. Eddie dusted his hands off, rolling his eyes,

"If anyone here is a wild animal it's you, fuckhead, and don't call me that!" They all laughed, Bill standing up, looking at the sky.

"W-we should get g-g-oing, maybe go to the d-diner? B-beats being out here, I think E-Eddie will get sick if we s-stay longer." His statement wasn't without cause, Eddie was shivering, goosebumps covering his body.

"Good idea Big Bill! Now let's get on chaps, before our turtle dies in the cold!"

Notes for the Chapter:

They go to the diner after, working on chapter 9!:)